

## **Labor History in the Schools (Assembly Bill 172)**

### **Testimony before Wisconsin State Assembly Committee on Labor April 8, 2009**

From Kenneth Germanson, President, Wisconsin Labor History Society, 6333 W. Bluemound Rd., Milwaukee WI 53213, 414-771-0700x20, [info@wisconsinlaborhistory.org](mailto:info@wisconsinlaborhistory.org)

Committee Chair Sinicki and committee members: I wish to thank the committee for promptly scheduling a hearing on this bill that will require our schools to teach about labor unions, workers, their history and the collective bargaining process. We've come to you several times asking for your support of this measure. Now, it's time to act.

This difficult economic period makes the passage of AB172 all the more timely. Much of the debate we have heard over the last six months about the recession has reflected upon the activities of the New Deal under Franklin D. Roosevelt. There has been lots of historical reflection about the role of the WPA or the Securities and Exchange Commission; yet, you've heard very little about the one act of the New Deal which may have had more longterm impact on the well-being of American workers. That act was the National Labor Relations Act, or Wagner Act, that was signed into law by FDR on July 5, 1935. The act provided two simple features: first, it protected workers' rights for the first time to organize into unions, and, secondly, it required employers once the workers organized to bargain in good faith to reach an agreement.

What happened then? Workers organized in quick fashion, and employers, usually with great reluctance, eventually agreed to contracts with their workers. It's one of America's great success stories but it's rarely recognized in the history books. By the 1950s, the American worker was the best paid and most productive on earth; living standards for ordinary citizens soared, often on a single income. And one out of every three workers in the USA in the mid-1950s was in a labor union. While this was happening, American business was triumphing. It has often been said that the passage of the Wagner Act helped to preserve the free enterprise system, largely overcoming the prospect of restless unemployed workers in the 1930s from turning to totalitarian forms of government like communism.

But who is aware of this today? Very few persons, and it's a result of an educational system that has overlooked a key part of American history.

It's precisely this omission that AB 172 seeks to overcome. The bill will put balance into our understanding of history, which too often seeks to portray the American experience as the triumph of

capitalists like John D. Rockefeller, Andrew Carnegie and J. P. Morgan while forgetting people like A. Philip Randolph whose work with the Sleeping Car Porters Union helped to give birth to the civil rights movement of the 1960s; or a woman like Lizzie Hando, the 64-year-old widow who led the Women's Action Group that gave strength to the men striking during the Great Oshkosh Woodworkers strike of 1898; or an educator like John R. Commons who with Frank J. Weber of the WSFL helped to father benefits like Workers Compensation or Unemployment Compensation. And the list goes on!

The School Boards Association will argue against this bill, calling it a mandate. The bill may indeed be a mandate, but it is a mandate without any added costs for school districts. All it asks is that during the learning experience of students that they be exposed to the history of the labor movement and to collective bargaining. It does not strictly prescribe a specific teaching curriculum; that's up to the individual districts to determine. It's not calling for a full semester class; indeed, labor history may be taught in many existing curriculum formats: in literature by focusing on books like "The Grapes of Wrath," in music by including folk songs like "Joe Hill," in social studies classes by discussing the role of the individual within collectives like coops and unions.

The Department of Public Instruction already has a curriculum ready for 4<sup>th</sup> graders, 8<sup>th</sup> graders and 11<sup>th</sup> graders, fitted to the state standards. It can be downloaded for free right now on our website, <http://wisconsinlaborhistory.org>

There are other easy-to-use resources available. They are attached herewith.

Already, the education goals in Section 118 include provisions requiring teaching about specific groups, including cooperatives and individual ethnic groups. In comparison to the number of persons involved in these groups, it must be noted that members of unions, now totaling some 375,000 in Wisconsin, far outnumber the individuals in the above mentioned groups. Historically, too, labor unions were very much in the fabric of our life. In my childhood in Milwaukee, virtually everyone in our neighborhood belonged to a union; it's our heritage.

Just as an aside, I recall in about 1938, when I was nine we kids organized a strike against a neighbor man who took our baseball when it rolled into his yard from the vacant lot where we played. It was the only ball that we had that was decent enough to hit, and we put together crayoned signs saying "Unfair to baseball players," nailed them to sticks and marched in front of his house, careful to remain legally on the sidewalks. The police arrived and mediated: we got the ball back and agreed to change the direction of home plate to avoid the ball getting into his yard.

Yes, the labor movement was very much in our heritage then. It should be recognized as part of our heritage now. Virtually all of our citizens have union members in our past, grandfathers and great grandfathers who were construction workers, who worked on the railroads, who marched picket lines at Allis-Chalmers and Kohler and Gisholt Machine and in the great struggles of the Bay View Tragedy and the Oshkosh Woodworkers.

Perhaps, in my mind, the most important reason to pass AB172 is that the teaching of labor history shows the triumph of ordinary citizens over the powers of society: only by organizing into labor unions could working people in Wisconsin eventually gain the living standards that many of us enjoy; it was only the strength and impetus of labor that brought about unemployment and workers compensation, the end to child labor, the eight-hour-day, public education, our state university system and technical college system. I could go on and on, but you get the point.

Today's young people, facing unprecedented challenges in our economy and in the world, must be able to see that working people can indeed join together to make a better society for all. The lessons of the Wisconsin labor movement tell the story. We ask you to pass AB172 now. Thank you.

# **7 Reasons why we need to teach labor history**

The State Legislature needs to require every school district in Wisconsin to include the teaching of labor history and collective bargaining in its curriculum because:

1. **Teaching about labor has been largely ignored in our schools.** An examination of text books in history and the social sciences finds barely a mention about the contributions of workers and their unions in the making of our nation.
2. **It's time to balance the scales.** Most school children readily hear about the corporate leaders and politicians of our nation's history; rarely do they hear about the heroes among our working people who struggled to bring equity and justice into the workplace and into our communities.
3. **Trade unions in Wisconsin and throughout the nation have contributed to our way of life.** Such contributions include: the 8-hour day, health care insurance, vacations and holidays, a fair wage scale, safe and healthful working conditions, Social Security and Medicare, unemployment and workers compensation, plus civil rights, including voting rights laws. Our nation's public education system, including its universities, is a product of the constant support of labor unions and their members.
4. **Labor unions are part of Wisconsin's heritage.** The state has always been at the forefront of worker struggles, including the Bay View Tragedy of 1886 during the 8-hour day movement, the Great Oshkosh woodworker strike of 1898 involving historic participation of Clarence Darrow in conspiracy trials, the creation of labor-management cooperation in the Wisconsin River valley that brought prosperity and labor peace to that area, the organizing among our industrial plants during the 1930s and 1940s, which brought about a good standard of living to our workers.
5. **Most Wisconsin families have a labor tradition.** By the 1950s, more than 35% of Wisconsin workers had joined unions. Their stories were "front page news" daily.
6. **Cost of School Districts will be minimal.** The proposed law leaves it up to each district to develop its own method of teaching about labor history and collective bargaining. Teaching materials are readily available, and can be inserted within existing curricula.
7. **The story of labor and workers can provide more excitement in the classroom.** The need to make history alive and interesting to students is critical in today's schools. The struggles of working people will prompt many students to look back upon their own families and backgrounds, making history more relevant.

## TEAMSTERS "GENERAL" LOCAL UNION No. 200

*Affiliated With the International Brotherhood of Teamsters*

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Mr. Chairmen and Committee,

My name is Thomas Bennett, President of Teamsters "General" Local Union No.200 of Milwaukee Wisconsin. I am also a proud graduate of Pewaukee High School, Class of 1980.

THOMAS L. MILLONZI  
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Growing up, my personal impressions of the importance of the values of hard work were seeing my father leave the house early in the morning and come home at the end of the day, drenched with the days sweat. He only complained of the boss, the weather and the old Ford he drove to work. He never complained about his pay, his fellow workers or his Union. He understood what he was earning in benefits, wages, job security and workers rights were determined by the men and woman of the Organized Labor movement in which he never may have met. I know I wasn't alone in experiencing this fact, as many families in my small community of Pewaukee traveled to Milwaukee to work at the Breweries, Manufacturing Plants, Foundries, Tanneries and Food Processing Plants. Many of us knew our Fathers and Mothers were Union members, but that was the limit of our knowledge of a Union or the Organized Labor Movement.

Why should Organized Labor History be taught to young minds.....

Today's teenager can go into great detail about who Chris Brown is and what he is most famous for.....but yet ask a teenager who Cesar Chavez is and most will say it's a street in Milwaukee. These young minds have become a society of "today's latest news"; they have no passion or desire to

understand where we have been. Cesar Chavez was labor leader and activist who worked with the solid voice to promote improvements and safety for migrant farm workers that are still use in today's workplace. Brother Chavez passed in 1993 with his work still incomplete. Having a young mind Google Cesar Chavez instead of looking to see what the next saga in the Chris Brown story could possibly take that young mind in a direction to continue the work of Brother Chavez.

Again, I am a Teamster. The first question people ask me is "Do you know where Jimmy Hoffa is?" My answer is always the same; you'll see Jimmy Hoffa in every Teamster you meet. This great labor organization has been on the forefront of many advancements of workplace safety, workers rights, and importantly worker education which Brother Hoffa brought to the table. His message and his vision is a corner stone of this great labor organization. When young minds look at the history of the Teamsters, alike many other Labor organizations, the acts of violence will and do surface. These acts of violence were not only committed by pro labor activists but also by those who were hired to protect the communities lashed out against striking workers. This fact can not be altered, nor can this history be changed, but it should be told on factual accounts to have young minds understand what the cost of organized labor advancement was.

Mostly overlooked are the human right issues Organized Labor brought to the forefront. Let me quote," Equal pay for equal work should become a constant, vigorous slogan among all employees in all crafts. The strength and brains of women and girls are exploited the world over and especially so in the United States. All working men and women should become

actively, and, if necessary, drastically interested in fighting for equal pay for duties performed by either sex. The standard of living in every workingman's home is lowered by sexual inequality of pay and both sexes should band together and swat the curse from all parts of earth where it exists." This quote did not come the 1970's, 80's or 90's, but was printed in a July 1917 issue of the Teamster Journal. The lessons of Organized Labor in the public school system will challenge the negative perceptions that exist concerning the image of organized skilled labor.

History shows that organized labor has been a key element in your daily events. The first federal prevailing wage law was passed by the Republican Congress of 1868 when it passed the National Eight-hour Law that provided for an eight hour day on public construction while ensuring workers were still to be paid the prevailing wage. A Republican Congressman, Robert L Bacon introduced the first version of the eventual Davis-Bacon Act in the pre-Depression year of 1927. Bacon obtained crucial support in 1930 from Senator James L. Davis to combine their efforts to author the Davis-Bacon which was passed by a Republican Congress and signed by President Herbert Hoover in 1931. In 1935, organized labor worked to pass the Social Security Act.

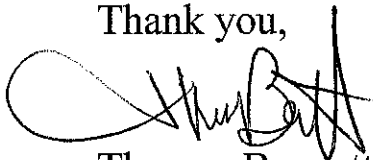
In Wisconsin, our organized labor history dates back to 1848 with labor unrest in Milwaukee, as the first successful strike involving the Ship Carpenters. In 1886, the Bay View tragedy where 7 workers were killed while on a peaceful march for establishing the 8 hour work day. These marchers were killed by State Militia. 1911 the State passed its first workers compensation law and in 1932 the State passed into law unemployment compensation.

With the teaching of organized labor history in the school system, the history lessons should explore both avenues of the positive results and the negative results. This will give an entire scope of the history where the young minds can objectively see the paths taken and the outcome of those paths taken.

Educating young minds leads to advancement is democracy. The lessons we teach create knowledge that will be exercised at some point and time. Many Labor leaders have the natural ability to forge ahead, but given the tools of educating the young minds with the history of Organized Labor in our school systems, a leader may emerge evolving from that lesson taught. This is an opportunity that should never be exhausted.....let's give a young mind a chance to start.

Teamsters "General" Local Union No.200 supports bill AB 172.

Thank you,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Thomas Bennett", with a large, stylized loop at the beginning.

Thomas Bennett

President

Teamsters "General" Local Union No.200



# GENERAL TEAMSTERS UNION LOCAL 662

Affiliated with the International Brotherhood of Teamsters, and Wisconsin Teamsters Joint Council No. 39



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AB 172

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I AM A BUSINESS REP FOR TEAMSTERS LOCAL 662. I ALSO REPRESENT JOINT COUNCIL 39 WHICH REPRESENTS OVER 40,000 ACTIVE TEAMSTERS STATE WIDE AND 18,000 RETIREES. I WANT TO THANK YOU FOR THIS OPPORTUNITY TO SPEAK ON BEHALF OF AB 172.

WHEN LOOKING AT THE LEGISLATIVE WEB SITE I COULDN'T HELP NOTICE A SIMILAR BILL (AB115) WHICH WOULD REQUIRE THE TEACHING OF THE HISTORY OF THE HMONG PEOPLE IN OUR SCHOOLS. WE REPRESENT THE HMONGS IN OUR UNIONS AND ALSO SUPPORT THIS BILL. BUT I WONDER IF IT SEEMS A BIT IRONIC TO THOSE SPEAKING AGAINST OUR BILL WHICH IS TEACHING AMERICAN HISTORY.

ONCE AGAIN LABOR FINDS ITSELF IN A FIGHT FOR SURVIVAL. BUT THIS TIME IT'S ABOUT TEACHING YOUNG PEOPLE OUR HISTORY, SOMETHING THAT FOR SOME REASON SOME OF US DON'T WANT TO BECOME COMMON KNOWLEDGE, POSSIBLY BECAUSE WHAT LABOR FOUGHT FOR AND TURNED INTO LAW WAS EXACTLY WHAT BIG BUSINESS FOUGHT AGAINST?

AN EIGHT HOUR WORK DAY, FAIR WAGES, SOCIAL SECURITY, WORKERS COMP, CHILD LABOR LAWS, DIGNITY AND RESPECT IN THE WORK PLACE ARE JUST A FEW OF THE THINGS THAT WERE FOUGHT FOR AND ARE NOW LAWS OF THE LAND. WHAT WE LOST WAS OUR RECOGNITION IN TODAYS POPULATION OF YOUNG PEOPLE.

IF YOU ASK ANY YOUNG PERSON TODAY WHAT A UNION IS YOU MAY HEAR A VARIETY OF ANSWERS SUCH AS WHO ARE THE TEAM MASTERS OR WHAT IS AFSCME? WE CAN'T TAKE ALL OF THE BLAME WHEN OUR OWN GOVERNMENT LET THE LABOR LAWS ON THE BOOKS FALL BY THE WAYSIDE AND GO UNINFORCED.

I ONCE HEARD GEORGE W. BUSH SAY IN ONE OF HIS MINDLESS SPEACHES ABOUT THE FRUITS OF WARRING WITH IRAQ THAT WE WERE GOING TO GIVE THEM DEMOCRACY AND THIS WOULD ALSO ALLOW THEM TO HAVE UNIONS. FIGHTING AGAINST THIS BILL IS IMMORAL, UNPATRIOTIC AND INDEFENSABLE.

I SERVED IN THE ARMED FORCES FROM 1964-1967 AND I NEVER THOUGHT I WOULD ONE DAY BE FIGHTING IN MY OWN COUNTRY FOR THE RIGHT TO HAVE THE TRUTH TOLD.

PLEASE PASS THIS VERY IMPORTANT BILL.

**Testimony of Dr. Bryan Kennedy, President of AFT-Wisconsin  
before the Assembly Committee on Labor****Testifying in favor of Assembly Bill 172, the Labor History Bill****April 8, 2009; Madison, Wis.**

Good morning, and thank you for your time. My name is Bryan Kennedy and I serve as President of AFT-Wisconsin, a statewide labor federation whose member-unions represent a wide range of public employees, including teachers and paraprofessionals at more than twenty K-12 districts throughout Wisconsin.

Just as Wisconsin enjoys a rich tradition of excellent public schools, so too do we enjoy a rich heritage of labor activism. From the very inception of the nation's labor movement, Wisconsin activists have been at the forefront of struggles that brought us safety and wellness standards, an eight-hour workday and an end to child labor abuses; that is to say, Wisconsin unionists have historically led the charge among "the folks who brought you the weekend."

This tradition of Wisconsin working people fighting for shared values – justice, equality and a decent standard of living – is a tradition we should all take pride in, and it is a tradition that should be taught in our public schools.

Incorporating labor history into an education program is a common sense approach to developing a well-rounded curriculum. Few would debate the merits of an economics or business program; labor history is the opposite side of the same coin.

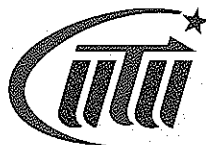
In fact, labor history coursework will help install a sense of self-pride for many Wisconsin students. Most students in our state's K-12 public schools are not children of the politicians and CEOs that are held up as heroes in history text books. Learning about the victories and struggles of working-class citizens will shine the light on historic role models that our K-12 students can more readily relate to.

This ability to relate to historic figures is more than an interesting exercise – it's opening a doorway to a more meaningful education experience. When history lessons "click" with a student, she is far more likely to connect to the values of a lesson, rather than merely committing to memory a series of dates and events. The student is also more likely to develop a deeper sense of intellectual curiosity and find greater mental reward in his daily school work.

Teaching labor history is good for our K-12 students, helping them to develop a sense of pride in their own background, while affording them the opportunity to enjoy a richer and more varied education. It is important that you pass AB 172 to help instill in our children the values of justice and equality that the labor movement champions.

Thank you again for your time and I will appreciate your committee's support for the Labor History Bill.

Timothy S. Deneen (312), Director  
Jeffrey J. Thompson (582), Assistant Director  
William A. Hauck (581), Secretary



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***united transportation union***

## Wisconsin Legislative Board

### COMMITTEE ON LABOR

08 April 2009

3436.09

The Wisconsin Legislative Board of the United Transportation Union represents operating crew members of the Class I railroads in Wisconsin.

We fully support the goals of AB 172.

The Railroad Brotherhoods are some of the oldest labor organizations in America's proud tradition of collective action for the benefit of the whole. Over the years, our members have benefited with family supporting jobs and an excellent retirement system.

We continue today to work with management and federal and state agencies with goals of reducing risks for our members, railroad employees, and the general public. Our success has resulted in productivity gains and increased efficiencies for the Carriers.

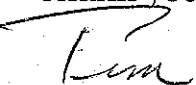
Knowledge sparks interest and debate. This in turn opens doors that expose students to new ideas and challenges many of the stereotypes.

Understanding our history is essential to understanding our system, and the successes and failures that took place along the way. There is no way to understand the middle class in America without understanding the part played by labor organizations. The checks and balance that labor organizations provide are beneficial to all parties involved.

As a third generation railroad employee/union member, I am proud to be able to provide for my family. As a union representative I am proud to be part of an organization that works for the betterment of all workers and working families. I believe in the cornerstones of integrity, dignity, honesty, and respect.

Please support AB 172.

Thank you,

  
Tim Deneen  
State Director

1-800-362-9472  
Madison, Wisconsin

Legislative Hotlines



1-202-225-3121  
Washington, D.C.



# Wisconsin State AFL-CIO ...the voice for working families.

David Newby, President • Sara J. Rogers, Exec. Vice President • Phillip L. Neuenfeldt, Secretary-Treasurer

TO: Assembly Labor Committee Members  
FROM: Phil Neuenfeldt, Secretary-Treasurer  
DATE: April 8, 2009

RE: **Support for Assembly Bill 172**  
**Teaching Labor History in Public Schools**

Assembly Bill 172 requires that school districts include the history of organized labor and the collective bargaining process in their instructional program. It does not require additional teachers, or special classes or new texts. The implementation of AB 172 is left to school districts and teachers who will know best how to cover the topic. Instructional materials based on Wisconsin's Model Academic Standards are available for teachers to use to fulfill this requirement.\*

Union members and progressive allies fought for the eight-hour day, child labor laws, safe workplace standards, pensions, health insurance coverage, overtime rights, vacations, minimum wage laws, unemployment insurance, workers compensation, civil rights laws, family and medical leave rights and many more reforms too numerous to mention. Labor unions led the successful drive for universal free public education for every child. The labor movement has always viewed public education as fundamental to the productive participation of everyone in our society. Yet, the vital history of that same labor movement is largely ignored in history textbooks and the public school curriculum. This denies our youth a well-rounded education, handicaps their ability to deal with the world in which they will work, and leaves them without knowledge of the essential role of the American labor movement in ensuring democratic rights. Assembly Bill 172 will help fill that void.

The labor movement is not asking for special attention; we are asking for balance. The perspective of business is fully represented in textbooks. Business also has the financial resources to flood the schools with additional free curriculum materials to promote its views. We are asking for legislators to affirm that the history of workers and the unions they created is important and deserves to be given proper recognition in our schools. Assembly Bill 172 will help accomplish that goal, and we ask for your support.

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\* The Department of Public Instruction has a *Lessons in Labor History* curriculum ready for 4<sup>th</sup>, 8<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> graders which can be downloaded for free on the website of the Wisconsin Labor History Society (<http://wisconsinlaborhistory.org>). The American Labor Studies Center web site also has a number of excellent resources for teachers at ([www.labor-studies.org](http://www.labor-studies.org)).

PN/JR/ls:opeiu#9,afl-cio

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# Businesses should back greater unionization

By Michael Rosen, Marc Levine and Cheryle Maranto

Posted: Apr. 4, 2009

Judging from the recent competing editorials in The Wall Street Journal, the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel and other leading newspapers, and from the escalating rhetoric of business and labor, the nation is about to be put through another destructive, ideologically based battle over a labor law reform bill known as the Employee Free Choice Act. The Chamber of Commerce describes the coming battle as "Armageddon." This couldn't come at a worse time for the country. The deepening economic crisis needs business and labor working together with the new administration to build a sustainable economic recovery.

This does not suggest, as some would have it, that we put off fixing America's labor law. Delay would both block recovery and doom any effort at reforms that are badly needed. There is a solution. President Barack Obama could break the longstanding impasse over labor law and bolster his economic strategy by calling on business and labor to work with his administration and Congress to enact the Employee Free Choice Act as an essential part of the nation's economic recovery program.

Unions have historically been the strongest and most consistent institutions for achieving gradual improvements in worker wages and for reducing income inequality within and across industries and occupations. The passage of the National Labor Relations Act in the middle of the Great Depression laid the foundation for what became known as the post-war "social contract." From the mid-1940s through the 1970s, wages grew roughly in tandem with productivity growth. As union membership declined precipitously after 1980, this social contract broke down. Productivity grew, but ordinary workers' wages stagnated and income inequality worsened. Restoring workers' ability to organize is the first step in getting wages and productivity moving together again. Vice President Joe Biden and his middle class task force will not be successful in rebuilding middle class incomes without restoring workers' ability to gain access to collective bargaining.

Another equally large body of industry-specific research has demonstrated that major investments like those about to be made in infrastructure, renewable energy, health care and others only realize their full return if combined with workplace relationships that foster worker engagement, teamwork, coordination and labor-management partnerships. These innovative workplace practices and the improvements in productivity and service quality they generate cannot be achieved if, as is the case today, conflicts, tensions and resistance dominate in organizing processes and bargaining relationships.

Employers who have chosen the path of union recognition and cooperation have often found benefits in lower turnover, higher productivity and enhanced capacity for innovation. Respect for workers is more conducive to employee commitment and contribution than unilateral management control. The garment unions' transformation of sweatshops into humane and collaborative enterprises early in the 20th century, the innovative design of UAW-Saturn cars in the 1990s, and cooperation between UAW Local 72 and Chrysler at the Kenosha Engine Plant all demonstrate the potential of union-management partnership. Fixing the basics in labor law and following this up with industry-specific initiatives to put these innovative practices to work are essential to getting the full return on the investment of these public resources.

The positive impact of unionization on Wisconsin's economy is clear. Union members in Wisconsin and across the country earn significantly more than non-union workers. Over the four-year period between 2004 and 2007, unionized workers' wages in Wisconsin were on average 11.9% higher than non-union workers with similar characteristics. That means that, all else equal, Wisconsin workers that join a union will earn 11.9% more - or \$2.18 more per hour in 2008 dollars - than their otherwise identical non-union counterparts. Yet union coverage rates have been declining for several decades. In 1983, the first year for which state level unionization data is available, 26.9% of workers in Wisconsin were either members of a union or represented by a union at their workplace. By 2008, that portion declined to 16%.

Slow wage growth has squeezed the middle class and contributed to rising inequality. Increasing union coverage rates could likely reverse these trends as more Americans would benefit from the union wage premium and receive higher wages. According to the Center for American Progress, if unionization rates were the same now as they were in 1983 and the current union wage premium remained constant, new union workers in Wisconsin would earn an estimated \$1.1 billion more in wages and salaries per year. If union coverage rates increased by just 5 percentage points over current levels, Wisconsin's newly unionized workers would earn an estimated \$503 million more in wages and salaries per year. Non-union workers would also benefit as employers would likely raise wages to match what unions would win in order to avoid unionization.

The provisions of the Employee Free Choice Act mirror successful strategies already in use by well-known

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employers such as telecom giant AT&T, healthcare leader Kaiser Permanente and others. These companies practice voluntary recognition of unions through majority sign-up and have successfully negotiated contracts with their unions.

Obama can both avoid Armageddon and open up a new era of innovative and productive labor management relations and workplace policies by calling on business and labor to put their outworn ideologies aside and work with him and the Congress to enact the Employee Free Choice Act and other labor and employment policy reforms needed to support the nation's economic recovery plan. How could responsible business or labor leaders fail to respond to such a request from their new president in this time of national crisis?

*Cheryle Maranto is associate professor of management at Marquette University; Marc Levine is a senior fellow and founding director of the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee Center for Economic Development; Michael Rosen is an economics instructor at Milwaukee Area Technical College.*

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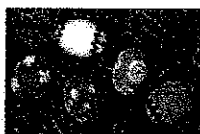
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